

Introduced by Senator Lowenthal

April 1, 2009

Senate Joint Resolution No. 6—Relative to pedestrian safety.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 6, as introduced, Lowenthal. Pedestrian safety.

This measure would urge the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Motor vehicles designed to provide the desirable
2 benefits of reducing harmful pollutants and operating with greater
3 fuel efficiency include gasoline-electric hybrid and electric-only
4 vehicles, and in the foreseeable future may include vehicles
5 powered by hydrogen fuel cell and other engine designs that rely
6 on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline-powered internal
7 combustion engine; and
8 WHEREAS, These vehicle engine designs operate or are likely
9 to operate with virtually no sound being produced by the vehicle;
10 and
11 WHEREAS, The total number of hybrid motor vehicles sold
12 per year in the United States is growing dramatically, and may
13 someday equal or exceed the number of internal combustion engine
14 motor vehicles on the nation's roads; and
15 WHEREAS, With its large population and its ongoing leadership
16 in the promotion of fuel efficient motor vehicles, California has a
17 disproportionately high number of alternative fuel vehicles
18 operating on its streets; and

1 WHEREAS, Blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate traffic
2 by sight and instead must listen to traffic to discern its speed,
3 direction, and other attributes in order to travel safely and
4 independently; and

5 WHEREAS, Other people, including pedestrians who are not
6 blind, bicyclists, runners, and small children, benefit from
7 multisensory information available from vehicle traffic, including
8 the sound of vehicle engines; and

9 WHEREAS, When operating on their electric engines, hybrid
10 vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and others, rendering
11 those vehicles dangerous when driving on the street, emerging
12 from driveways, moving through parking lots, and in other
13 situations where pedestrians and vehicles come into proximity
14 with each other; and

15 WHEREAS, Failure to take immediate action to ensure that
16 blind pedestrians can hear hybrid and other silent vehicles in all
17 phases of their operation will inevitably lead to pedestrian injuries
18 and fatalities; and

19 WHEREAS, These accidents are preventable through vehicle
20 designs which take into account the multisensory nature of traffic
21 detection and avoidance, and require that vehicles emit a minimum
22 level of sound designed to alert all pedestrians, especially blind
23 pedestrians, to the presence of these vehicles; and

24 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174, which passed in 2008, directed
25 the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development
26 Commission (CEC) to convene a Quiet Motorized Vehicle and
27 Safe Mobility Committee to investigate strategies to increase
28 pedestrian safety around electric and other quiet vehicles; and

29 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174 required the CEC to convene a
30 committee, to be comprised of representatives of vehicle
31 manufacturers, the blind or visually impaired pedestrian
32 community, insurance industry, vehicle research entities, and law
33 enforcement organizations, including, but not limited to, the
34 Department of the California Highway Patrol; and

35 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174 directed the committee to
36 research, identify, and make recommendations to the CEC on
37 strategies to ensure that all motorized road vehicles, regardless of
38 engine type or configuration, emit sound sufficient to be heard and
39 localized; and

1 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174, also required the CEC to make
2 recommendations based on the research conducted that are to
3 include, but not be limited to, proposed legislation and regulations,
4 needed research or technology, and funding options for
5 implementing recommendations recognizing the need for urgent
6 action in this matter by providing for the funding of collaborative
7 research into methodologies that would enable pedestrians to hear
8 hybrid vehicles; and

9 WHEREAS, The Governor's veto of Senate Bill 1174 was based
10 not on a failure to recognize the severity of the problem, but rather
11 the belief that federal funding for this research was available; and

12 WHEREAS, Although recently enacted provisions of federal
13 law require a report to be prepared by June of this year on this
14 problem, funding has not yet been made available to conduct the
15 research necessary to find a uniformly applicable and appropriate
16 solution and to adopt national standards based upon that research;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, The United States Congress is considering the
19 Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, HR 734, which would direct
20 the United States Department of Transportation to conduct the
21 appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for
22 new motor vehicles; now, therefore, be it

23 *Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of*
24 *California, jointly*, That the California State Legislature calls on
25 the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, HR
26 734; and be it further

27 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of
28 this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
29 States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority
30 Leader of the United States Senate, and to each Senator and
31 Representative from California in the Congress of the United
32 States.